WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Reserved products for SSIs

*344. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that manufacturing of only thirty five products is now in the reserved list for manufacturing in the Small Scale Industry (SSI) sector;

(b) if not, the facts in this regard;

(c) the number of reserved products for the SSI sector by March, 2004; and

(d) the reasons for reducing the number of reserved commodities for manufacturing in SSI sector from March, 2004 to January, 2008?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (d) Review of the list of items exclusively reserved for the small scale sector is a continuous process. Consultations are held with the concerned stakeholders, followed by deliberations in the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Reservation, constituted under the Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 (IDR Act). Items are dereserved by the Government based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. Dereservation is made through a notification under Section 29B of the IDR Act. Following the above procedure, the total number of items reserved for exclusive manufacture by small scale sector, which was 675 in March, 2004 has been reduced to 35 as on date.

Government has taken several policy measures for making the Indian industry, including the very vital micro and small enterprises sector, competitive and to facilitate the achievement of their full potential. One of the key measures has been the gradual and calibrated removal of restriction in the form of reservation of items to be exclusively produced in the small scale sector. This has been done to improve the competitiveness of the industry; to enable the Indian industry to compete with imports; promote creation of job opportunities; upgrade its technology to produce quality products and to achieve economies of scale.

Law on social security for workers

*345. SHRI PENUMALLI MADHU: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government intends to bring any law on social security for workers as promised in the Common Minimum Programme;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons for not implementing the pro-people social security for workers as promised in the Common Minimum Programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES): (a) to (c) With a view to providing social security to unorganised sector workers, the Government has introduced the "Unorganised Sector Workers' Social Security Bill, 2007" in Rajya Sabha on 10.09.2007.

The Government has been implementing pro-people social security schemes for the workers in the unorganised sector. The 'Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana' for BPL families in Unorganised Sector has been launched on 1st October, 2007. The scheme envisages smart card based cashless health insurance cover of Rs. 30,000 to the BPL worker's family unit of five. With a view to providing death and disability cover to rural landless households, the 'Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana' has been launched on 2nd October, 2007. Under 'The Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)', old age pension has been extended to all 'Below Poverty Line' persons above the age of 65 years.

Indo-Pak Joint Group for export strategy

*346. MS. MABEL REBELLO:
SHRI B. J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether an Indo-Pak Joint Group has been constituted to explore the possibilities of coordinated export strategy in potential areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) which are the special groups of trade that are proposed to be focussed?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. India and Pakistan have constituted a Joint Study Group (JSG). The objective of the JSG is to develop a policy framework to maximize benefits of geographical proximity, identifying opportunities for enhancing economic cooperation and create a framework for facilitation of trade in goods including elements such as customs cooperation, standards, certification system etc. The Sub-Groups of the JSG are as follows:

(i) Customs Cooperation and Trade Facilitation Measures

(ii) Non-Tariff Barriers

(iii) Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures

(iv) Standards and Conformance

(c) These Sub-Groups are mandated to look into the following:

1. Identification of NTBs existing between India and Pakistan in the bilateral trade.
2. Identification of sectors for mutual cooperation in SPS and TBT issues.
3. To finalize an agreement on SPS & TBT for acceptance of each other's inspection and certification systems.
4. Bilateral agreement on Customs Cooperation on specific bilateral issues.
5. To work towards electronic exchange of information.
6. To mutually extend technical assistance in capacity building , and to identify the areas to which the same can be extended.
7. To exchange list of products under mandatory certification in both countries which can be considered for trade facilitation.